

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANKARA 07660 110735Z

21

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJ: A REVIEW OF THE OCTOBER 12 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

1. THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE OCTOBER 12 PARTIAL SENATE ELECTIONS IS NOW IN ITS FINAL HOURS. THE OUTCOME IS GENERALLY EXPECTED TO BE INTERPRETED AS A REFERENDUM ON WHO SHOULD GOVERN TURKEY: REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) CHAIRMAN ECEVIT OR PRIME MINISTER (JUSTICE PARTY (JP) CHAIRMAN) DEMIREL. ALTHOUGH THE OUTCOME OF THIS ELECTION WILL NOT ALTER SIGNIFICANTLY (ONLY 6 OF 450 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEATS ARE AT STAKE) THE COMPOSITION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WHICH ELECTS THE PRIME MINISTER, IT MARKS THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD ITS PREFERENCES SINCE THE INDECISIVE GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS OF 1973. THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN BOTH BITTER AND STERILE. IT HAS BEEN STERILE BECAUSE THE PRINCIPAL CONTENDERS HAVE CHOSEN TO AVOID SERIOUS DEBATE OF THE ISSUES -- SINCE THESE ARE PRIMARILY ECONOMIC IN NATURE AND THUS ARE NOT ONLY RELATIVELY UNEXCITING BUT ARE POTENTIALLY EQUAL LIABILITIES FOR EACH PARTY. AVOIDANCE OF THE ISSUES HAS RESULTED IN INCREASINGLY BITTER PERSONAL ATTACKS ON EACH OTHER BY THE LEADERS OF THE VARIOUS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ANKARA 07660 110735Z

PARTIES. IN FACT THE BASIC CAMPAIGN TACTIC OF THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES

HAS BEEN TO DISCREDIT PERSONALLY THE LEADER OF THE OTHER PARTY.
THE FOLLOWING IS AN OVERVIEW OF THE CAMPAIGNS
OF THE VARIOUS PARTIES.

2. A. RPP CHAIRMAN ECEVIT, THE SOLD "CHARISMATIC" FIGURE IN
CONTEMPORARY TURKISH POLITICS (WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF
NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY (NAP) CHAIRMAN TURKES WHO PROBABLY
REPRESENTS ONLY 5-8 PERCENT OF THE VOTE), IN ADDITION TO
ATTEMPTING TO DEFAME DEMIREL, HAS CAMPAIGNED
ON HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS PRIME MINISTER, ON
WHAT HE WOULD HAVE ACCOMPLISHED HAD HE NOT BEEN HOBBOLED BY HIS
COALITION PARTNER ERBAKAN OF THE PRO-ISLAMIC NATIONAL SALVATION
PARTY (NSP), AND ON WHAT HE REPRESENTS FOR TURKEY'S FUTURE.
ALTHOUGH CONSIDERED "LEFTIST" (AND A DUPE OF THE "COMMUNISTS" WHO
"SURROUND" HIM) BY MOST RIGHTISTS, HE IS SEEN BY MANY
TRADITIONALLY CONSERVATIVE VILLAGERS, BY THE "INTELLIGENTSIA",
BY MUCH OF THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY, AND BY SOME OF THE
BUSINESS ELITE AS THE "HOPE" OF THE FUTURE. HIS PRIME
MINISTERSHIP DURING THE "PEACE OPERATION" ON CYPRUS HELPED
HIM WITHIN THE MILITARY AND GAINED HIM WIDESPREAD
POPULAR ACCEPTANCE AS THE "DEFENDER" OF TURKISH CYPRIOTS.
ECEVIT HAS DIRECTED, WITHOUT IGNORING
HIS CYPRUS ACHIEVEMENTS (IN HONOR OF WHICH DOVES -- OR PIGEONS --
ARE LAUNCHED AT ALMOST EVERY RALLY), MOST OF HIS CAMPAIGN
ORATORY TOWARD CRITICISM OF ALLEGED DOMESTIC FAILINGS OF THE DEMIREL
GOVERNMENT IN THE ECONOMIC AND CIVIL LIBERTIES FIELDS. HE HAS
LAMBASED THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES, SUCH
AS FAILURE TO RESOLVE THE CYPRUS PROBLEM, TIMID HANDLING OF THE
TURKISH REACTION TO THE U.S. ARMS EMBARGO, FAILURE TO
RESPOND NEGATIVELY TO THE LIFTING OF THE ARMS EMBARGO (WHICH
BECAUSE IT REQUESTS DISCUSSIONS ON THE OPIUM POPPY CONTROL
PROGRAM IS CONSIDERED BY THE RPP TO BE AN INTERFERENCE IN
INTERNAL TURKISH AFFAIRS) AND INABILITY TO SECURE SUPPORT FOR
TURKISH POLICY FROM ARAB AND THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES. AS INDICATED
ABOVE, HOWEVER, ECEVIT HAS HIT HARDEST ON THE THEME OF CORRUPTION
WITHIN DEMIREL'S FAMILY AND AMONG HIS FORMER ASSOCIATES, HIGH-
LIGHTING WHAT HE LABELS AS THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT'S PROTECTION OF
(AND SUPPORT FOR) MURDERERS, BLACKMARKETEERS AND GANGSTERS.
B. DEMIREL HAS ATTEMPTED TO PRESENT HIMSELF AS THE MAN OF
MODERATION WHO IS TRULY CONCERNED WITH "BUILDING" TURKEY -- EARLY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ANKARA 07660 110735Z

IN HIS CAMPAIGN DEMIREL MADE THIS POINT TIME AFTER TIME AS HE
TRAVELLED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY DEDICATING FACTORIES AND DAMS.
DEMIREL HAS HAD AN UPHILL STRUGGLE. HE IS NO LONGER A CROWD-
PLEASING ORATOR, NOR IS HE NEARLY AS POPULAR AS ECEVIT WITH
THE MASS CIRCULATION PRESS. MOREOVER, HE IS STILL HANDICAPPED BY
MEMORIES OF THE 1971 MILITARY "COUP BY MEMORANDUM" WHICH
REMOVED HIM FROM OFFICE. HOWEVER HE HAS TIRELESSLY WORKED
TO CREATE AN IMAGE AS THE SOLID, COMPETENT MAN

OF STATE WITH A REALISTIC, REALIZABLE VISION OF TURKEY'S FUTURE: AN ANTICOMMUNIST DEMOCRACY FIRMLY WITHIN THE WESTERN BLOCK WHICH PROVIDES AN ATTRACTIVE INVESTMENT CLIMATE FOR DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN CAPITAL IN ORDER TO ACCELERATE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. DEMIREL'S CONSTITUENCY HAS THE SAME BASIC BELIEFS, BUT IT SUPPORTS HIM NOT AS A HERO FIGURE BUT BECAUSE HE LEADS THE PARTY WHICH TRADITIONALLY REPRESENTS THOSE INTERESTS. DEMIREL'S CAMPAIGN ORATORY HAS BEEN DIRECTED AGAINST RPP-INSTIGATED "PROTECTION" OF ANARCHISTS AND MISGUIDED ECONOMIC POLICIES WHICH RESULTED IN HIGH PRICES DOMESTICALLY AND IN OVERPRICED AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS. ON THE WHOLE, DEMIREL'S CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT LESS VENOMOUS THAN ECEVIT'S AND SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TOWARD THE FOLLOWING GOALS: (A) MINIMIZING JP LOSSES IN THE SENATORIAL ELECTION (IN WHICH 33 JP SEATS VERSUS ONLY 8 RPP SEATS ARE AT STAKE); (B) CONSOLIDATING HIS POSITION ON THE CENTER-RIGHT PRIMARILY BY ELIMINATING THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) WHICH RECEIVED 12 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN 1973, BY WINNING THE BACKING OF ERSTWHILE SUPPORTERS OF THE REPUBLICAN RELIANVE PARTY (RR) WHICH TOOK 5 PERCENT IN 1973 AND BY PREVENTING THE NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP) FROM INCREASING ITS VOTE ABOVE THE 12 PERCENT IT RECEIVED IN 1973; AND (C) AS A RESULT, LEGITIMIZING AND STRENGTHENING HIS CLAIM TO BE PRIMIN. DEMIREL HAS GIVEN A PROMINENT PLACE IN THE CAMPAIGN TO RECENT CONVERT FROM THE DP MUTLU MENDERES (SON OF THE LATE PRIME MINISTER ADNAN MENDERES) IN ORDER TO VISUALLY DEMONSTRATE THAT HE, DEMIREL, IS THE TRUE SUCCESSOR OF THE LATE PRIMIN. DEMIREL HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO CAPITALIZE ON THE CONGRESSIONAL DECISION LIFTING THE ARMS EMBARGO, IN PART BECAUSE OF ECEVIT'S ATTACK ON THE POPPY CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

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PAGE 04 ANKARA 07660 110735Z

AND SIMILAR CRITICISMS WHICH HAVE COME FROM HIS COALITION PARTNERS. CONSEQUENTLY, DEMIREL HAS BY AND LARGE AVOIDED COMMENT ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. C. THE OTHER PARTIES. THE NSP ENGAGED IN AN ALL-OUT CAMPAIGN TO VILIFY THE JP, WITH THE RPP ONLY AS A SECONDARY TARGET. GAMBLING ON STRENGTHENING ITS CLAIM AS THE "THIRD" PARTY, THE NSP HAS IMPERILED ITS FUTURE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE JP WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT. UNLESS THE GAMBLE PAYS OFF IN TERMS OF A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE, WHICH IS GENERALLY BELIEVED UNLIKELY, THE NSP WILL BE REDUCED TO A SPOILER ROLE. THE NAP, WHICH WILL LIKELY SHOW SOME IMPROVEMENT OVER ITS 3.4 PERCENT SHOWING IN 1973, HAS APPARENTLY NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER TO TRY TO TAKE OVER THE JUSTICE PARTY FROM WITHIN, OR TO COMPETE FROM WITHOUT. THE NAP HAS NOT ENGAGED IN SERIOUS INVECTIVE AGAINST DEMIREL AND SEEMS CONTENT TO REMAIN IN THE GOVERNMENT AND

CONTINUE TO PLACE ITS SUPPORTERS THROUGHOUT THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY. THE DP, CONCENTRATING ON SURVIVAL, HAS ENGENDERED LITTLE ENTHUSIASM. CHAIRMAN BOZBEYLI HAS SPEND MOST OF THE CAMPAIGN IN THE FEW PROVINCES (PRIMARILY KONYA) WHERE THE DP HAS A CHANCE FOR A STRONG SHOWING. HOWEVER, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE DP WILL BE ABLE TO HOLD MUCH MORE THAN 5 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. MACOMBER

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